

'Captivating and constructive'

Patch Library's storytime makes reading fun

Story & photos by Melanie Casey

It's often difficult to get a preschooler to sit still, but Patch Library technician Stacey Costello seems to know the trick: books.

Every Thursday at 11:45 a.m., Costello leads the Patch Library Storytime, reading about five books with a similar theme to a group of 2-to-4-year-olds (and their parents). Storytime is followed by coloring time and a snack.

Her audience is held rapt by bright pictures and rhymes and interacts by asking and answering questions while Costello reads.

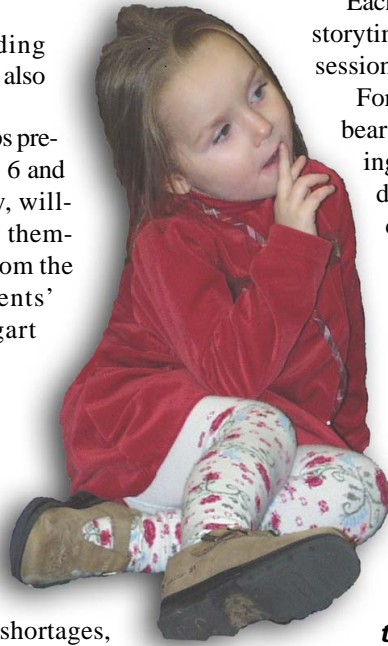
For the preschoolers, attending storytime is more than just fun: It's also helping them to learn.

Reading aloud to children "develops pre-reading skills for children birth to age 6 and prepares them to enter school ready, willing and wanting to learn to read by themselves," according to information from the Department of Defense Dependents' Schools (Bavaria District) Stuttgart Reads Initiative.

A Stuttgart tradition

Storytime has been held at the Patch Library on and off for as long as the library has been open, said Patch Reference Librarian Natalie Camp.

Although there have been intermittent pauses because of staff shortages, the program always returns, Camp said. Storytime is



"a long standing tradition in the Stuttgart community," Costello added.

Costello began attending storytime three years ago with her daughter Abby, who is now 6. The teacher then was Tiffany Goode, whom Costello said she tries to emulate when conducting her storytime.

"She had a great rapport with the kids and made it fun," Costello said.

Costello chooses books that have pictures, rhymes or "anything that will hold [the preschooler's] attention."

Each session has a theme (look for a Christmas-themed storytime Dec. 18), which Costello ties into the coloring session and snack.

For instance, the theme for the Dec. 4 storytime was bears; Costello read five books about bears (including the old favorite *Corduroy*) then gave the children a coloring page with a bear and a snack consisting of grapes and "Winnie the Pooh" juice boxes.

Regular readers

Storytime averages about eight preschoolers each week, and many children are regulars.

One frequent attendee is 2-year-old Christian Lewis, who has been coming to the Patch Storytime since he was about 15 months old. His mother, Cristina Lewis, said Christian "loves Ms. Stacey and he loves to read books."

Lily Gamble, 3, listens intently as library technician Stacey Costello reads during storytime in the Patch Barracks Library.



Patch Library technician Stacey Costello reads and Christian Lewis, 2, gets closer for a better look.

Cheryl Gamble began attending with her daughter Lily, 3, shortly after moving into the area a few months ago.

She said attending storytime makes Lily "feel important because she has somewhere to go every week." Lily added that she likes going so she can check out some new books.

Carmela Harkey, whose son Caelon, 4, has attended several sessions, said storytime "is wonderful. The kids learn new things and it's a good time for them. The illustrations keep them captivated."

According to the Stuttgart Reads Initiative, reading aloud to children "is the single most important task parents can do to ensure their child's success in school and in life." The Patch Library's Storytime makes it fun.